

Several articles in this Bulletin were first given as seminars in a series in the Institute of Development Studies in autumn 1994. This addressed a key question facing rural development analysts and practitioners: does the upsurge in armed conflict in Africa, especially pronounced since the end of the Cold War, mean we need a new or additional agenda for rural development? This Bulletin explores in greater detail some of the issues raised in that seminar series.

It is clear that rural development thinking can no longer claim that conflict falls outside its mandate. Conflict is too widespread and too destructive. Wars, civil conflict and banditry characterize large areas of the poorest parts of the continent, and while some conflicts (South Africa, Mozambique, perhaps Mali) are on the way to being solved, others (Sudan, the Great Lakes, perhaps Kenya) continue or are getting worse. Large numbers of deaths, as often civilians as soldiers, the destruction of rural capital and infrastructure, loss of harvests and livestock, the disappearance of governance from the countryside (in places from the towns as well), the erosion of civil society and the reemergence of ethnicity as a rallying point, have created new situations. Donors and non-government organizations are devoting more resources and time to conflicts, and new organizations are being created whose mandate is conflict. Researchers also need to respond. As this Bulletin shows, they have important insights, which can help us understand what is happening and why, and guide new policies and activities.

The scope of this Bulletin is modest. Conflict is a huge canvas, and we have not tried to paint it all. Rather, we explore five issues which should be on the agenda of rural development in Africa (and also South Asia, and perhaps eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union). Some are a viewing of a familiar rural development theme through the prism of conflict, others are new departures for the economists, natural resource specialists, agronomists, anthropologists and political scientists who dominate the development community. The overall message is that if we are to face the issue of conflict effectively, we need to learn new skills, cover new literatures, and talk to new kinds of specialist, to enable us to do our own work with new perspectives.

War and Rural Development in Africa

Introduction

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Understanding Conflict Better

The first task is to contribute to a better understanding of the causes, conduct and consequences of war in Africa. Recent work by several scholars on 'complex political emergencies' has begun to illuminate the special characteristics of contemporary African warfare. In his contribution to this Bulletin, Alex de Waal develops some of these lines of enquiry. Three processes are particularly important.

The first, fuelled by the loss of patronage by Great Power sponsors and economic decline in many African countries, is the development of new forms of economic activity by the military, often based on predatory warfare on the population of their own country. An important process of military accumulation is taking place in several countries, most notably Sudan, through the control by armed formations (the formal military or others) of economic enterprises related to the war, of resources such as diamonds, ivory, timber or drugs, of donor-sponsored food aid programmes to war victims, and of commerce in war zones. Everywhere in Africa, civil unrest provides the occasion for seizure of assets, especially livestock, from civilian non-combatants, and in Kenya and Tanzania livestock raiding as a form of predatory capital accumulation by non-pastoralists has become common; in Sudan this has been taken a further step with the seizure of southern civilians as slaves for the North. In West Africa, some of the most vicious fighting has been over control of diamond fields. The development of these new forms of war economy have solved the problem of how to maintain conventional and unconventional armed forces in the field, and how to motivate them.

Arising from these new forms of war economy, warfare has been decentralized. De Waal argues that in several countries this was initially the result of a deliberate fragmentation of military authority, which enabled the regime to play one faction of the military off against another in order to reduce the threat of a coup. The result has been more decentralized, locally-specific types of military organization, and the creation of proxy forces; in Sudan this

has been taken to its logical conclusion, with the government sub-contracting part of its war with the South to northern tribal militias. Although the process is poorly documented, several cases of extreme civil insecurity in places in addition to South Sudan (for example pastoral areas of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) are almost certainly the result of political or commercial sponsorship, arming and encouragement to minority ethnic groups to 'raid their traditional enemies'.

The third process described by de Waal is particularly sinister. A rapid process of innovation in military techniques is occurring in African wars, based on the successful adaptation of military doctrine from elsewhere, with some apparently effective local inventions. These include the development from earlier models of locally-adapted counter-insurgency and destabilization techniques, including the use of exemplary terror and deliberate exacerbation of ethnic rivalries, and the widespread use of child soldiers. These trends reinforce the movement towards decentralized, locally-specific, forms of warfare.

The main lesson of de Waal's article is that we need to think about African conflicts in new ways, because so much that is happening is new and specific. We need to anchor these trends in a theoretical framework which helps us ask the right questions, and relate these processes to wider social and economic processes. It seems likely that present thinking about social capital can help in this respect. Social capital - those features of social organization, such as trust, norms of reciprocity, and networks of civic engagement, which make possible cooperation and collective action for the common good¹ - is one of the first casualties of war. There is a two-way connection here: war, especially civil war or community violence, destroys social capital; but the absence, or destruction, of social capital makes community violence and civil war more likely.

One of the most depressing features of de Waal's account of trends in conflict in Africa is the way it becomes apparent that social capital - the trust and

¹ Robert D. Putnam, 1992, **Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy**, Princeton University Press.

networks of civic engagement which are one of the bases for survival in African rural societies - is being deliberately targeted by many of the counter-insurgency and exemplary terror mechanisms he describes. Not only are conflicts made worse, but rehabilitation is made more difficult: in addition to the reconstruction of physical capital which is necessary, there has to be a simultaneous or prior reconstruction of social capital. While technical assistance and outside investment can speed up the first process, we know little about how to help the latter. But at least if we recognize it is essential, we may avoid some of the problems which arise from ignoring it.

More Disaggregation

If war is becoming more varied and more locality-specific, it is important to disaggregate our analysis. Several articles in this collection describe the particular form taken by conflict in specific local circumstances, and show how hazardous it is to generalize at this stage in our understanding.

Byrne gives a preliminary analysis of the way gender cuts across all the other lines - ethnic, cultural, religious, or national - along which conflict is organized. Conflict tends to redefine notions of masculinity and femininity, and the allocation of gendered responsibilities often changes for the duration of the conflict. Women are allocated new roles: commonly they are assigned the role of bearer of culture, which can erode rights and restrict mobility, but this role may also make them especially vulnerable to attack by soldiers from the other side. Women also often acquire new economic roles, replacing men who are drafted into the armed forces, which may also open up new rights and responsibilities. When the conflict ends, there is a process of renegotiation of gender identities: women may be able to formalize their increased participation in public life and defend their new roles; but they may also find they are vulnerable at this moment, and lose advantages they had acquired.

Emergency relief distribution during or after conflict is especially in need of a more disaggregated gender analysis. The common pattern of targeting household heads for relief may undermine women's normal responsibilities for household management and food allocation.

The article by Hendricksen, Mearns and Armon explores livestock raiding in Turkana in Northern Kenya. The common perception is that the Turkana, like other pastoral groups in Africa, have a long tradition of raiding, which has been made more dangerous by the introduction of modern small arms. Hendricksen *et al.* show that in fact there has not been a simple evolution from customary to contemporary raiding, but that they are two very different things with different causes and consequences. The traditional, redistributive raiding was internal to the pastoral economy, and was in some respects livelihood-enhancing, since it provided a chance for poor households to rebuild herds and reduce vulnerability; mainly young men in the warrior age-set were at risk. Contemporary, predatory raiding occurs on a much larger scale, the identities and motives of the main actors are different, the impact on pastoral livelihoods is much more serious, and everyone is at risk, with women and children especially vulnerable. The profile of the winners and losers changes: increasingly, winners are outside actors, including those who sponsor such raids for political or economic reasons, while all pastoralists in the raided area are losers. Predatory raiding creates large scale covariate risk, often making large areas of good grazing unusable, and in combination with drought or other disruption of livelihood systems can trigger acute food insecurity and famine.

Conflict Resolution

With a rise in the number of conflicts, better procedures for conflict resolution become imperative. There is beginning to be a useful literature on this, especially involving NGO attempts to use customary conflict-resolution methods.

Less well known is the South African experience in handling conflicts, some of which is summarized by Cousins. South Africa is a rich source of ideas for people involved in conflicts in other parts of Africa. Cousins points out that our changing understanding of the nature of ecological processes in dry areas of Africa - non-equilibrium ecological systems theory - which puts more emphasis on variability in natural resource availability, should change the way we think of conflicts over natural resources, and make them, and procedures for resolving them, central to our concerns. The focus

of the administration of agropastoral areas in particular should shift from the regulation and control of resource use to mediation and arbitration between conflicting interests and groups.

To assist in this process, Cousins describes negotiating principles derived from the professional literature on conflict resolution, including the recognition that conflict is endemic, can serve useful as well as destructive functions, and can often be accommodated constructively. Where gross injustice is built into social structures, however, fundamental structural change is necessary. As a sort of halfway house, in conflicts where there are great asymmetries of power between protagonists, a preliminary process of empowering the weaker party to the conflict is essential before meaningful negotiations can start. A move away from formal judicial processes towards alternative, including customary, dispute resolution methods will often be necessary.

Post-conflict Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation after conflict is in some respects a more extreme form of rehabilitation after drought, and suffers from some of the same preconceptions of donors.

In a detailed case history of agricultural rehabilitation in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, Pottier shows how some of the agencies involved had a powerful disaster narrative of what was needed, and were guided by this despite mounting evidence that this was not the case. The supposed near-total loss of locally-adapted plant genetic material triggered a response which would perhaps have been appropriate had the diagnosis been correct. But it wasn't. Farmers and markets were more resilient than expected, and conditions were highly variable, leading to great variety in the availability of seeds for the following planting season. A blanket response to supply seeds from outside was clearly inappropriate; it would have been better to have helped market channels work better, and to create opportunities for migrant wage labour. The comparison with misplaced blanket food aid as a response to famines is striking.

The lesson of Pottier's research is that post-conflict rehabilitation must be guided by careful case by case assessment, in a participatory manner with the

surviving populations, and not be governed mainly by media images or what is convenient for donors. In the trade-off between speed of action and careful planning, there will sometimes be a case for less speed and more preliminary study.

New Partners

If rural development is to take up the challenge of conflict, we will have to be open to the need for new alliances with professionals in different fields. Two are represented here.

Parker describes how there is an increasing trend for Northern agencies to concern themselves with the psychiatric health and well-being of people who have survived violent conflict, and to respond by sending out specialist counsellors or therapists. She questions the wisdom of this: we know too little about the way non-Western cultures respond to extreme violence, and it is likely that the available repertoire of therapeutic responses is inadequate or inappropriate. The behaviour of trauma victims is determined by local concepts of causality, pain, accountability and guilt. Inappropriate Western concepts about these things could easily inform policy in the wrong directions, leading yet again to a response based on premises owing more to the abilities and needs of agencies than those of the survivors of the conflict.

Military humanitarianism, and an increased role for peacekeeping forces under multilateral or single nation command, have grown spectacularly and seem bound to continue to grow. Slim's article documents the way the military have come to terms with and conceptualized this. Traditional UN peacekeeping depended on three key principles: consent by the parties to the conflict to the intervention; the use of minimum force; and the impartiality of the intervening forces. Recent events have changed much of this, and the UN has in places taken on a war-fighting role, both unsuccessfully (in Somalia), and more successfully in Bosnia. Slim shows how thinking has evolved in the British army about the overriding importance of consent in peace keeping. Given the increasingly important role played by the military in conflicts in Africa, it is important for researchers to understand better what their thinking is, and what is guiding them.

Conflicts are going to be a key part of the situation facing rural development in Africa for the foreseeable future. Researchers have a duty to start

responding to this agenda, which will take them outside their habitual tracks. This Bulletin starts to map out some of these new areas.